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**Testimony for the  
Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee  
Judith B. Greiman  
Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges  
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On behalf of the member institutions of the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC), I am submitting testimony in opposition to HB 7037, AAC a Municipal Option to Impose an Admission Surcharge on Events Promoted by a Private Institution of Higher Education. This bill would allow a municipality to pass an ordinance that would impose an up to fifty cent ticket surcharge on events held within the municipality and sponsored/promoted by a private college or university. The surcharge would need to be remitted to the town within thirty days of the event.

We oppose this bill for both substantive and policy reasons and have several questions about its interpretation. We believe that colleges and universities are engines of employment and education and contribute much to their local regions. They should not be viewed as the source for incremental revenue for state or local government.

In fact, our recently released study shows that CCIC members have a \$15.1 billion economic impact on Connecticut, employ more than 17,000 full-time equivalent employees, and have over 200,000 alumni living in the state who work, volunteer and pay almost \$2 billion in taxes here. We are magnets for students and visitors who spent at least \$639 million in FY13 in Connecticut. We created or retained 155,067 jobs in Connecticut in FY13 as a result of the economic activity generated by the sector and are responsible for Connecticut and its municipalities receiving \$1.14 billion in tax revenue as a result of the sector's economic activity. From FY09-13, we invested on average more than \$8.4 billion annually in new and renovated residential and non-residential buildings and facilities as well as in technical and scientific equipment, library books and other academic resources. This created jobs in the construction and manufacturing sectors while providing our students and faculty with resources for learning, research and innovation.

From a practical perspective, our events rarely cost the town, as we typically hire local police to augment our campus safety officers. Our events add value to our local communities making them livable, vibrant places and enhancing the quality of life. Additionally, they bring people to the towns where they often spend money in local businesses. The Legislature has recognized this kind of multiplier effect when it supported improvements to the XL Center for UCONN basketball and the development of the football stadium at Rentschler Field. We should embrace what the colleges bring to the region rather than putting up obstacles.

Many if not most campus events are offered to the public free of charge. This is because we believe that institutions of higher education should serve as points of entry into the arts in our state, and therefore, for events for which we charge admission, we keep ticket prices highly accessible. Many events are offered for \$4-\$8 per ticket, so an additional 50 cents would be noticed. Further, most events need to be subsidized by the University or by outside grants meaning that ticket sales often cover only a mere fraction of the cost of events with the rest picked up by the university. This bill would further increase our costs by imposing an administrative burden. Given the low number of tickets at most schools, it may actually cost more to implement a fee and collection process than it would be worth. Additionally, in some cases, ticket prices for sporting events are set by the conference or NCAA, so it might be difficult to add a surcharge.

Albertus Magnus College, Connecticut College, Fairfield University, Goodwin College, Mitchell College, Quinnipiac University, Rensselaer at Hartford, Sacred Heart University, St. Vincent's College, Trinity College, University of Bridgeport, University of Hartford, University of New Haven, University of Saint Joseph, Wesleyan University, Yale University

As noted by one school, "we actually lose money on our performance center, but we consider it part of our community outreach. An increase in ticket cost related to additional charges would likely increase our losses and force us to take another look at continuing to operate at a loss and opening up events to the public."

These are just some of the questions that have been raised about the bill:

- Does this only apply to university run events or would it include student run or community events located on and off campus for which an admission fee is charged?
- What is the definition of an event? Does it apply to the free movies we do for the community, or the health fairs, or the farmers market? Does it apply to student events in which a fee is charged to raise money for a student organization?
- What about events for which no fee is charged?
- Does it apply to charitable events for which all fees are donated to a good cause?
- Does the 30 day timing of the remittance coincide with the timing of any payment to the state of taxes on food or other goods that campuses must already make or are you adding to the burden by giving colleges a date to comply that is difficult to manage?
- Why are public universities left out of the bill? Their events are far larger than most in the private nonprofit sector and would provide significantly more revenue to their towns. Hartford, Storrs, Danbury, New Britain and Willimantic would certainly be helped by such a provision. Why are private college events singled out if the payer is intended to be the attendee, not the institution?
- Why are area arts and professional sports teams left out of the bill? Why would Yale Rep have to charge a higher price than the Schubert for great theater? Why would the Lincoln Theater at the University of Hartford have to charge a higher price than Infinity Music Hall for a great concert? Why would the Quick Center at Fairfield have to charge a higher price than the Westport County Playhouse? Why would Trinity hockey have to charge a higher price than the Hartford Yard Goats?

The General Assembly has already addressed this issue in connection with the state's 10% admissions tax (see CGS 12-541). In that case, the General Assembly provided a broad exemption from the admissions tax for events sponsored by any tax-exempt organization. We believe this is the right policy, as it treats organizations fairly and encourages all colleges and universities to contribute to the cultural and economic vitality of Connecticut's cities and towns.

We urge you to reject this bill.